

# Wearing Buildings

Is it possible to wear a building?

## Theme

This lesson engages students in researching, designing, and then constructing a wearable model of a structure.

## Student Objectives

use imagination and hand-eye coordination to create a costume that looks like a building

## Activities

design and construct a “wearable” building

## Type

indoor, classroom activities with room to spread out

## Timeframe

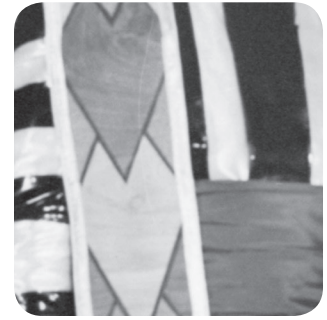
three class sessions of 40 minutes each

## Materials

- **Handout A** - photograph of an architect dressed as the Chrysler Building
- materials for creating buildings: a variety of large boxes or cardboard pieces, grocery store paper bags (for small children with narrow shoulders), or large paper yard bags (for larger children with wider shoulders)
- a collection of recycled materials: yarn, egg cartons, paper towel tubes, scraps of cloth, etc.
- crayons or markers
- colored construction paper
- scissors
- glue
- images of neighborhood buildings or Chicago structures for inspiration

## Teacher Prep

display **Handout A**



## Vocabulary

**Beaux-Arts** (*pronounced bow - ZAR*) (*bow rhymes with dough*) Beaux-Arts means “fine arts” in French; it is a style of architecture popular in France and the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century; buildings in this style typically have formal symmetrical floor plans, lots of ornamentation, and classical features borrowed from ancient Greek and Roman architecture

**façade** (*pronounced fah - SOD*) the front of a building

**texture** the way a material looks and feels

**rhythm** parts of the building that visually move your eye along

**pattern** something that repeats; typically windows or bricks on a building



## Discussion Points

- Describe one of your favorite buildings in Chicago.
- Is it small or big?
- How is the building used?
- Describe three features that you like about this building.
- What materials is the real building made from?
- What materials will you use to construct the building you will wear?
- Will it be a full costume or a headpiece?
- How will you fit inside it?

## Interdisciplinary Connections

### Language Arts

Students can write a short dramatic play and wear their building creations to tell a story from neighborhood history or to call attention to a city problem they are concerned about.

### Language Arts

When the students are wearing their building costumes, do they feel strong or weak? Do they stand out from the crowd or blend in with other buildings? Do they feel confident or nervous? Have students write about how it feels to be a building.

## Background Information for Teacher

Architects and architecture schools have a long tradition of gathering together to celebrate their profession. One of these celebrations was extra special. In January 1931, famous architects from the New York City area gathered at a Beaux-Arts Ball at the elegant Astor Hotel. Many of the architects who attended the gala event that night came dressed as a building they had designed. Imagine how fun it must have been to see all those architects dressed up in headpieces and costumes made to look like skyscrapers. The costume of William Van Alen, architect of the Chrysler Building, remains one of the most memorable of the evening.

The Chrysler Building in New York City was the tallest building in the world when it was finished in 1930. Its graceful vertical shaft is crowned with a tapered spire of great metal disks that resemble the hubcaps of a fine automobile. The Chrysler Building helped to inspire the chevron top and spire of the Two Prudential Plaza Building (180 North Stetson Street, near North Michigan Avenue and East Lake Street) built in Chicago in 1990.

Your students can have great fun creating their own unique “wearable” Chicago buildings. Full costumes or just headpieces can be created from recycled materials you’ve collected.



**View of the Two Prudential Plaza Building in Chicago inspired by the Chrysler Building in New York City.** (CAF, 2002)

## Activity Procedures

### DAY ONE

- 1 Use the Discussion Points to help your class begin thinking about buildings. Have students research and choose a building they will create into a costume. Use photographs of local buildings, pictures from magazines or books, or website images for inspiration. Encourage your students to look beyond famous skyscrapers and research other local structures, or design their own tall buildings to wear. Draw pencil sketches to show the four sides of their building costume and how it will look with them inside.

### DAY TWO

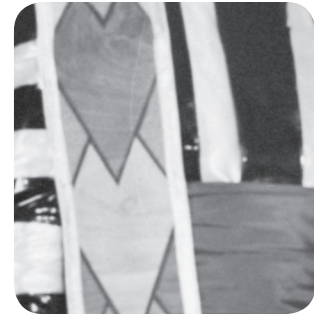
- 2 Begin making the costumes. It may be helpful for students to work in pairs for a time if they are using paper bags for the building. Once a circular head hole is cut in the bottom of the bag, one student should try it on while the student designer draws where they would like to include doors, windows, columns, patterns, or other building elements.

### DAY THREE

- 3 Use glue to attach three-dimensional ornamentation to the costume. Add color and textures using markers, crayons, or scraps of cloth.

## Extension

Present a fashion show to the rest of the school so the students can model their wearable buildings. Have the students write a narration to go along with the show.



## Resources

**AIA Guide to Chicago**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Alice Sinkevitch, ed. San Diego: Harcourt, 2004. A comprehensive guide to the city's architecture.

old **National Geographic** magazines with pictures of buildings for inspiration

[www.greatbuildings.com](http://www.greatbuildings.com)

[www.skyscrapercenter.com](http://www.skyscrapercenter.com)

## Illinois Learning Standards and Benchmarks

**25A** Understand the sensory elements, organizational principals and expressive qualities of the arts.

**25.A.2d** Visual Arts: Identify and describe the elements of 2- and 3-dimensional space, figure ground, value and form; the principles of rhythm, size and proportion and composition; and the expressive qualities of symbol and story.

**26B** Apply skills and knowledge necessary to create and perform in one or more of the arts.

**26.B.2d** Visual Arts: Demonstrate knowledge and skills to create works of visual art using problem solving, observing, designing, sketching and constructing.

**27B** Understand how the arts shape and reflect history, society and everyday life.

**27.B.2** Identify and describe how the arts communicate the similarities and differences among various people, places and times.





Architect William Van Alen in 1931 in his Chrysler Building costume, New York City. (© BETTMANN/CORBIS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. USED WITH PERMISSION.)